

The Million Dollar Mystery

By HAROLD MAC GRATH

Illustrated from Scenes in the Photo Drama of the Same Name by the Thanhouser Film Company

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SYNOPSIS.

Stanley Hargrave, millionaire, after a miraculous escape from the den of the gang of brilliant thieves known as the Black Hundred, lives the life of a recluse for eighteen years. Hargrave accidentally meets Braine, leader of the Black Hundred. Knowing Braine will try to get him, he escapes from his own home by a balloon. Before escaping he writes a letter to the girls' school where eighteen years before he mysteriously left on the doorstep his baby daughter, Florence Grace. That day Hargrave also draws \$100,000 from the bank, but it is reported that he dropped into the sea when the balloon he escaped in was punctured. Florence arrives from the girls' school. Countess Olga, Braine's companion, visits her and claims her as a relative. Two bogus detectives call, but their plot is foiled by Norton, a newspaper man. After failing in their first attempt, the Black Hundred trap Florence. They ask her for money, but she escapes, again falling them. Norton and the countess find Florence the next day, once more safe at home. The visitors having gone, Jones removes a section of flooring and from a cavity takes a box. Pursued by members of the Black Hundred, he rushes to the water front and succeeds in dropping the box into the sea. Accompanied by Braine kidnap Florence and hurry her off to sea. She leaps overboard and is picked up in a dazed condition by fishermen. Braine, disguised as her father, takes her back to sea with him. Florence sets fire to the boat and is rescued by a sailor and taken into the sea. Concealed above the rendezvous of the Black Hundred, a man learns of the recovery of the box from the sailor and sends a message to the police at the docks. The next day, he quickly communicates the fact to Jones. A duplicate of the box is later secured by the band, but before its contents are examined the box mysteriously disappears. Finding himself checkmated at every step, Braine decides to enmesh the Hargrave household in the law in order to gain free access to the house. The timely discovery of a plot by Norton sets the police at the heels of the pack and results in a raid on the gang's rendezvous, which, however, proves to be barren of results. Following a telephone message Jones received from a mysterious person whom he addressed as "Mr. Florence," he is directed to her home and taken out to sea. Through Norton's daring and skill as an aviator she is rescued and returned to her home. Time to confront an agent of the Black Hundred. Through treachery in the Hargrave household Florence is delivered into the hands of an agent of the Black Hundred. From the faithful Susan Norton learns that the doctor has declared her once stricken with smallpox and that he is preparing to spirit her away. By acting quickly the reporter, with the aid of Susan, succeeds in warning the young woman from the danger after an encounter with members of the gang.

CHAPTER XVII.

Setting Traps for Norton.

The Black Hundred possessed three separate council chambers, always in preparation. Hence, when the one in use was burned down they transferred their conferences to the second council chamber appointed identically the same as the first. As inferred, the organization owned considerable wealth, and they leased the buildings in which they had their council chambers. leased them for a number of years, and refurnished them secretly with trap doors, doors and panels and all that apparatus so necessary to men who are sometimes compelled to make a quick getaway.

When the Atlantic City attempt was turned into a fiasco by Norton's timely arrival Braine determined once more to rid himself of this meddling reporter. He knew too much, in the first place, and in the second place Braine wanted to learn whether the reporter bore a charmed life or was just ordinarily lucky. He would attempt nothing delicate, requiring finesse. He would simply waylay Norton and make a commonplace end of him. He would disappear, this reporter, that would be all; and when they found him he might or might not be recognizable.

So Braine called a conference and he and his fellow rogues went over a number of expedients and finally agreed that the best thing to do would be to send a man to the newspaper, ostensibly as a reporter looking for a situation. With this excuse he would be able to hang around the city room for three or four days. The idea back of this was to waylay Norton on his way to some assignment which took him to the suburbs.

All this was arranged down to the smallest detail; and a man whom they were quite certain Norton had not yet seen was selected to play the part. He had been a reporter once, more's the pity; so there was no doubt of his being able to handle his end of the game.

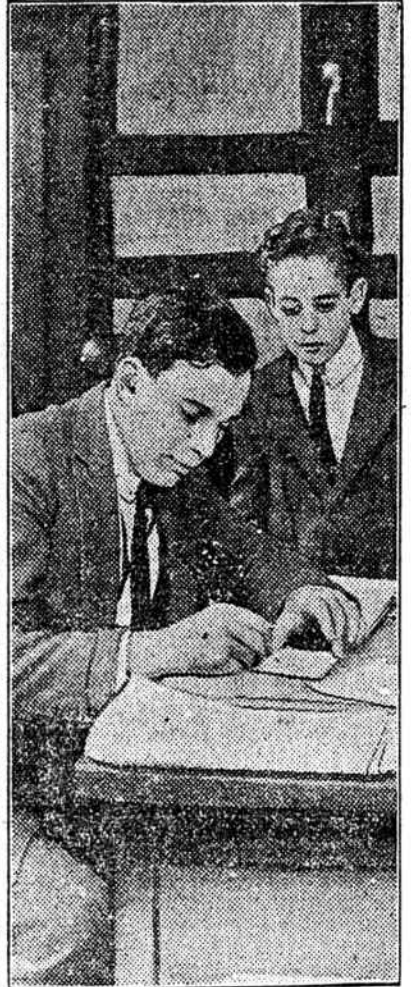
"I want Norton, I want him badly," declared Braine, "and woe to you if you let booze play in between you and the object of this move."

The man selected to act the reporter hung his head. Whisky had been the origin of his fall from honest living, and he was not so calloused as not to feel the sting of remorse at times.

"More," went on Braine, "I want Norton brought to 49. It's a little off the beat, and we can handle Norton as we please. When we get rid of this newspaper ferret there'll be another to eliminate. But he's a fox, and a fox must be set to trail him."

"And who is that?"

"Jones, Jones, Jones!" thundered Braine. "He's the live wire. But the reporter first. Jones depends a lot on him. Take away this prop and Jones will not be so sure of himself. There's a man outside all this circle, and all these weeks of warfare have



Norton Was at His Desk.

so his record was unknown. He had told the city editor that he had worked on a Chicago paper, now defunct. He paid no attention whatsoever to Norton, a sign of no little acumen. On the other hand Norton never went forth on an assignment that Gregg did not know exactly where he was going. But all these stories kept Norton in town; and it would be altogether too risky to attempt to handle him anywhere but outside of town. So Gregg had to abide his time.

It came soon enough. Norton was idling at his desk when the city editor called him up to the wicket.

"General Henderson has just returned to America. Get his opinion on the latest Balkan rumpus. He's out at his suburban home. Here's the address."

"How long will you hold open for me?" asked Norton, meaning how long would the city editor wait for the story.

"Till one-thirty. You ought to be back by midnight. It's only eight now."

"All right; Henderson's approachable. I may get a good story out of him."

"Maybe," thought Gregg, who had lost nothing from this conversation.

It was his opportunity. He immediately left the zone of the city desk

for a telephone booth. But as he passed the line of desks and busy reporters he did not note the keen scrutiny of a smooth faced, gray haired man who stood at the side of Norton's desk awaiting the reporter's return.

"Why, Jones," cried the surprised Norton. "What are you doing all this way from home?"

"Orders," said Jones, smiling faintly as he delivered a note to the reporter.

"Anything serious?"

"Not that I am aware of. Miss Florence was rather particular. She wanted to be sure that the note reached your hands safely."

"And do you mean to say that you came away and left her alone in that house?"

Again Jones smiled. "I left her well guarded, you may be sure of that. She will never run away again. It was waiting for Norton to read the note."

It was nothing more than one of those love orders to come and call at once. And she had made Jones venture into town with it! The reporter smiled and put the note away tenderly. And then he caught Jones smiling, too.

"I'm going to marry her, Jones."

"That remains to be seen," replied the butler, not unkindly.

"Well, anyhow, thanks for bringing the note. But I've got to disappoint her tonight. I'm off in a deuce of a hurry to interview General Henderson. I'll be out to tea tomorrow. You can find your way out of this old fire trap. By-by!"

The moment he turned away the smile faded from Jones' face, and with the quickness and noiselessness of a cat he reached the side of the booth in which Gregg believed himself so secure from eavesdropping. The half dozen words Jones heard convinced him that Norton was again the object of the Black Hundred's attention. He had seen the man's face that memorable night when the balloon stopped for its passenger. Before Gregg came out of the booth Jones decided to overtake him and forewarn him, but unfortunately the reporter was nowhere in sight.

There was left for Jones nothing else but to return home or follow when he came out. As this night he knew Florence to be exceptionally well guarded, both within and without the house, he decided to wait and follow the spy.

When Braine received the message he was pleased. Norton's assignment fitted his purpose like a glove. Before midnight he would have Mr. Meddling Reporter where he would bother no one for some time—if he proved tractable. If not, he would never bother any one again. Braine gave his orders tersely. Unless Norton met with unforeseen delay, nothing could prevent his capture.

When Norton arrived at the Henderson place, a footman informed him from the veranda that General Henderson was at 49 Elm street for the evening, and it would be wise to call there. Jim nodded his thanks and set off in haste for 49 Elm street. The footman did not enter the house, but hurried down the steps and slunk off among the adjacent shrubbery. His mission was over with.

The house in Elm street was Braine's suburban establishment. He went there occasionally to hibernate, as it were, to grow a new skin when close pressed. The caretaker was a man rightly called Samson. He was a bruiser of the bouncer type.

It was fast work for Braine to get out there. If the man disguised as a footman played his cards badly Braine would have all his trouble for nothing. He disguised himself with that infernal cleverness which had long since made him a terror to the police, who were looking for ten different men instead of one. He knew that Norton would understand instantly that he was not the general; but on the other hand he would not know that he was addressing Braine.

So the arch-conspirator waited; and so Norton arrived and was ushered into the room. A single glance was enough to satisfy the reporter, always keen eyed and observant.

"I wish to see General Henderson," he said politely.

"General Henderson is doubtless at his own house."

"Ah!"

"Don't be alarmed—yet," said Braine smoothly.

"I am not alarmed," replied Norton.

"Ah! I begin to see."

"Indeed!" mocked Braine.

"I have tumbled or walked into a trap."

"A keen mind like yours must have recognized that fact the moment you discovered I was not the general."

"I am indebted to the Black Hundred," cooly.

"Precisely. We do not wish you ill, Mr. Norton."

"To be sure, no," ironically. "What with falling safes, poisoned cigarettes, and so forth, I can readily see that you have my welfare at heart. What puzzled me was the suddenness with which these affectionate signs ceased."

"You're a man of heart," said Braine with genuine admiration. "These affectionate signs, as you call them, ceased because for the time being you ceased to be a menace. You have become that once more, and here you are!"

"And what are you going to do with me now that you have got me?"

"There will be two courses," Braine reached into a drawer and drew out a thick roll of bills. "There are here something like \$5,000."

"Quite a tidy sum; enough for a chap to get married on."

The two eyed each other steadily. And in his heart Braine sighed. For he saw in this young man's eyes incorruptibility.

"It is yours on one condition," said Braine, reaching out his foot stealthily toward the button which would summon Samson.

"And that is," interpolated Norton, "that I join the Black Hundred."

"Or the great beyond, my lad," took up Braine, his voice crisp and cold.

Norton could not repress a shiver. Where had he heard this voice before?

"Murder in cold blood?" he managed to say.

"Indefinite imprisonment. Choose."

"I have chosen."

"H'm!" Braine rose and went over to the sideboard for the brandy. "I'm going to offer you a drink to show you that personally there are no hard feelings. You are in the way. After you, our friend, Jones. This brandy is not poisoned, neither are the glasses. Choose either and I'll drink first. We are all desperate men, Norton; and we stop at nothing. Your life hangs by a hair. Do you know where Hargrave is?"

Norton eyed his liquor thoughtfully. "Do you know where the money is?"

"Norton smelt of the brandy."

"I am sorry," said Braine. "I should have liked to win over a head like yours."

Norton nonchalantly took out his watch, and that bit of bravado perhaps saved his life. In the case of his watch he saw a brutal face behind him. Without a tremor, Norton took up his glass.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," he said, "but I shall neither join you nor go to by-by."

Quick as a bird shadow above grass, he flung the brandy over his shoulder into the face of the man behind. Samson yelled with pain. Almost at the same instant Norton pushed over the table, upsetting Braine with it. Next he dashed through the curtains, slammed the door, and fled to the street, very shaky about the knees, if the truth is to be told.

General Henderson's views upon the latest Balkan muddle were missing from the Blade the following morning. Norton, instead of returning to the general's and fulfilling his assignment like a dutiful reporter, hurried out to Riverside to acquaint Jones with what had happened. Jones was glad to see him safe and sound.

"That new reporter started the game," he said. "I overheard a word or two while he was talking in the booth. All your telephone booths are ramshackle affairs, you use them so constantly. I tried to find you, but you were out of sight. Now, tell me what happened."

"Sh!" warned Norton as he spied Florence coming down the stairs.

"I thought you couldn't come!" she cried. "But ten o'clock!"

"I changed my mind," he replied, laughing.

He caught her arm in his and drew her toward the library. Jones smiled after them with that enigmatical smile of his, which might have signified irony or affection. After half an hour's chat, Florence, quite aware that the two men wished to talk, retired.

At the door Norton told Jones what had taken place at 49 Elm street.

"Ah! We must not forget that number," mused Jones. "My advice is, keep an eye on this Gregg chap. We may get somewhere by watching him."

"Do you know where Hargrave is?" Jones scratched his chin reflectively.

Norton laughed. "I can't get anything out of you."

"Much less any one else. I'm growing fond of you, my boy. You're a man."

"Thanks; and good-night."

When Olga Perloff called the next day Jones divested himself of his literary, donned a plain coat and hat, and left the house stealthily. Today he was determined to learn something definite in regard to this suave, handsome Russian. When she left the house Jones rose from his hiding place and proceeded to follow her. The result of this espionage on the part of Jones will be seen presently.

Meantime Jim went down to the office and lied cheerfully about his missing the general. Whether the city editor believed him or not is of no matter. Jim went over to his desk. From the corner of his eye he could see Gregg scribbling away. He never raised his head as Jim sat down to read his mail. After awhile Gregg rose and left the office; and, of course, Jim left shortly afterward. When the newcomer saw that he was being followed, he smiled and continued on his way. This Norton chap was suspicious. All the better; his suspicions should be made the hook to land him with. By and by the man turned into a drug store and Jim loitered about till he reappeared. Gregg walked with brisker steps now. It was his intention to lead Norton on a wild goose chase for an hour or so, long enough to give Braine time to arrange a welcome at another house.

Norton kept perhaps half a block in the rear of his man all the while. But for this caution he would have witnessed a little pantomime that would have put him wholly upon his guard. Turning a corner, Gregg all but bumped into the countess. He was quick enough to place a finger on his lips and motion his head toward a taxicab. Olga hadn't the least idea who was coming around the corner, but she halted the cab and was off in it before Jim swung around the corner.

Jones, who had followed the countess for something over an hour and a half, hugged a doorway. What now? he wondered. The countess knew the

city as how to entertain.

"But," laughed a guest not long ago, "I shall never forget how utterly funny it was, nor how we all enjoyed it, just as soon as we were assured the monkeys would not eat us."

Short-Sighted Bourbons.

One hundred years ago France was undergoing many changes, following the overthrow of Napoleon and the restoration of the Bourbons. Many of these changes were not to the liking of the

people, and the signs of popular discontent were increasing daily. Particular offense was given by the repudiation of Napoleon's famous concordat with the church, also by the efforts of the government to prohibit all buying and selling on religious holidays and Sundays. Everywhere in France there were premonitions of that situation which Napoleon foresaw when he said: "The Bourbons may put France at peace with Europe, but how will they put her at peace with themselves?"

ma. That was evidence enough for the astute butler. But what meant the pantomime and the subsequent hurry? He soon learned. The man Gregg went his way, and then Jim turned the corner. Jones cast a wistful glance at the vanishing cab of the Russian, and decided to shadow the shadow—in other words, follow the reporter, to see that nothing serious befell him.

The limer finally paused at a door, opened it with a key, and swung it behind him, very careful, however, not to spring the latch. Naturally Jim was mightily pleased when he found the door could be opened. When Jones, not far behind, saw him open the door, he started to call out a warning, but thought the better of it. If Norton was walking into a trap it was far better that he, Jones, should remain outside of it. If Jim did not appear after a certain length of time, he would start an investigation on his own account.

No sooner was Jim in the hallway that he was set upon and overpowered. They had in this house what was known as "the punishment room." Here traitors paid the reckoning and were never more heard of. Into this room Jim was unceremoniously dropped when Braine found that he



Up This Rope Norton Swarmed.

could get no information from the resolute reporter.

The room did not look sinister, but for all that it possessed the faculty of growing smaller and smaller, slowly or swiftly, as the man above at the lever willed. When Jim was apprised of this fact, he ran madly about in search of some mode of escape, knowing full well in his heart that he should not find one.

Presently the machinery began to work, and Norton's tongue grew dry with terror. They had him this time; there was, not the least doubt of it. And they had led him there by the nose into the bargain.

Twenty minutes passed, and Jones concluded it was time for him to act. He went forward to try the door, but this time it was locked. Jones, however, was not without resource. The house next door was vacant, and he found a way into this, finally reaching the roof. From this he jumped to the other roof, found the scuttle open, and crept down the stairs, flight after flight, till the whirl of a motor arrested him.

Conspirators are often overeager, too. So intent were the rascals upon the business at hand that they did not notice the door open slowly. It did not take the butler more than a moment to realize that his friend and any was near certain death. With an oath he sprang into the room, gave Braine a push which sent him down to join the victim, and pitched into the other two. It was a battle royal while it lasted. Jones knocked down one of them, yelled to Norton, and kicked the rope he saw down into the pit. One end of this rope was attached to a ring in the wall. And up this rope Norton swarmed after he had disposed of Braine. The tide of battle then swung about in favor of the butler, and shortly the fake reporter and his companion were made to join their chief.

Jones stopped the machinery. He could not bring himself to let his enemies die so horribly. Later he knew he would regret this sentiment.

When the people came, summoned by some outsider who had heard the racket of the conflict, there was no one to be found in the pit. Nor was there any visible sign of an exit.

There was one, however, built against such an hour and known only to the chiefs of the Black Hundred.

And still the golden tinted bank notes reposed tranquilly in his bid ing place!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Proof Positive.

"Don't you be afraid, Fritz!" called the ally as Fritz pommelled the new-comer at school. "He ain't got no big brother. His schoolbooks are perfectly new."

METHODISTS ORDER DIVISION

The Original Boundary Suggestion Was Adopted by the Church and Meeting Places Selected.

Sumter.—The session of the Methodist conference was featured by the adoption of the McLeod resolution fixing the boundary line of the division of the conference, the selection of Spartanburg for the meeting place for the first session of the new Upper South Carolina conference, the election of W. C. Kirkland for editor of the Southern Christian Advocate and the selection of Trinity church, Charleston for the next meeting of the South Carolina conference.

In the McLeod resolution which was adopted, the boundary line is as follows:

"That the line of division of the South Carolina conference be and is hereby fixed as follows: Beginning at the North Carolina line follow the line between Chesterfield and Lancaster counties, between Kershaw and Fairfield counties, thence across Richland county in a direct line to the junction of Kershaw and Fairfield counties at the Richland line to the junction of the Seaboard Air Line and the Southern railways, thence in a direct line to Ridgewood, thence following the trolley lines to Tyart Park, thence in a direct line to Simms station on the Atlantic Coast Line railway, thence in a direct line to the junction of Calhoun and Lexington counties at the southern Richland county line, from thence the line between Calhoun and Lexington counties, between Orangeburg and Lexington counties, between Barnwell and Alken counties to the Savannah river; except that Smyrna and Ebenezer churches in Kershaw county shall remain in the Upper conference and Kershaw and Salley churches shall remain in the Lower conference.

"That the name of the Lower conference shall be 'the South Carolina conference' and that said conference shall retain the historical records, the session, number and the chronological roll; that the name of the upper conference shall be 'the Upper South Carolina conference'.

On motion of W. L. Gray, the action of the conference was made unanimous.

Will Sell Seed to Farmers.

Columbia.—The Columbia chamber of commerce has offered to furnish grain at cost to all farmers in Richland county who are absolutely in need of assistance, and to this end has set aside \$50 as a nucleus fund. The plan is to have the farmers give notes, which will be made good at the harvesting of the crop, without interest and without definite date of maturity. The board of directors has enlisted the help of E. E. Hall, farm demonstration agent, in getting this matter before the farmers.

Governor Will Not Sign Notes.

Columbia.—At a meeting of the state's financial board in the office of the state treasurer, the bids for a loan of \$150,000 for current expenses of the state government were opened. The proposal of the Palmetto National bank of Columbia to take the notes at a rate of 5 per cent, was accepted by two of the three members of the board. Twenty banks were requested to submit bids and only two proposals were received.

SOUTH CAROLINA ITEMS.

President Wilson has been invited to visit Aiken during Christmas time. Pee Dee farmer sows more grain than usual.

Richland farmers are boosting the growing of tobacco.

The State Convention of Christian Endeavor Societies had a busy meeting in Columbia.

A committee met in Rock Hill to plan the state oratorical contest.

H. E. Danner of Beaufort has been elected manager of the varsity football team of the U. of S. C.

The "pay your bills" movement in Columbia has been a success.

The Farmers' Union warehouse at Barnwell and 165 bales of cotton were burned a few days ago.

Farmers of Marion county have formed a potato growers' association.

Two men were killed and three seriously injured by a boiler explosion near Hedges recently.

The grain canvassers are continuing their "live-at-home" campaign.

The Aiken Agricultural Club now boasts of owning its own home.

B. B. Hare of the national department of agriculture, with offices at Saluda, was in Columbia recently.

W. L. Hand, High School Inspector, has been spending a week in York county.

Much business was disposed of by the State U. D. C. convention at Yorkville.

The College Press Association of South Carolina held its annual session in Columbia with 40 delegates present representing 14 South Carolina institutions of learning.

Columbians consume, it is said, about 500,000 pounds of butter. The average retail price per pound is 27 cents.

E. J. Watson, state commissioner of agriculture, commerce and industries, has accepted an appointment to represent Columbia at the Southern Commercial congress, meeting in Washington, December 12.

John L. McLaughlin, state warehouse commissioner, has returned from an extended trip to Washington and New York City, relative to the collateral value of South Carolina warehouse receipts.

The governor has accepted the resignation of Julius E. Cogswell as colonel of the Third infantry, according to a letter received at the office of the adjutant general.

The girls' tomato clubs and the boys' corn clubs of Clarendon county held their fall meeting and exhibit in Manning recently. Both clubs have accomplished much this year.

Lancaster county people are boosting their fair.

James A. Hayne, M. D., state health officer, attended the American Public Health Association at Jacksonville, Fla.

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Acting Director of Sunday School Course.)

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 13

THE GREAT COMMISSION.

LESSON TEXT—Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:36-48. GOLDEN TEXT—Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.—Matt. 28:20.

This lesson consists of two paragraphs which constitute what might be termed two commissions or two parts of the Great Commission. There are four distinct accounts of the final commands of our Lord to his disciples, each presenting a different phase of the work he committed to his followers. In this lesson we have for our consideration two of these aspects which ought not to be confused. We will consider them in their chronological order.

I. The Appearance in Jerusalem, Thomas Being Absent. Luke 24:36-48. (1) The Resurrected Lord, vv. 36-43. The Emmaus disciples reported to the disciples, and those gathered with them in Jerusalem, the things they had experienced, especially in the breaking of bread. This occurred late in the evening (see Luke 24:29, 33). While they, and the others, were rehearsing the many things that had taken place on that first eventful day, Jesus himself suddenly appears in their midst without the opening of a door and asks them of their thoughts. Once before he had thus searched them (Luke 9:46, 47), but now the occasion is quite different. Fear of the Jews had crowded them into this room, but no closed door except that of the human heart can keep out the risen Lord. Simon's report (ch. 24:34) and that of the Emmaus disciples were not sufficient to allay their fear. Fear at this visible evidence of the supernatural is true of us all, but when Jesus truly is present there is peace no matter what may be the turmoil without, or the fear within.

Man of Flesh and Bone.

This appearance was a demonstration that it was he himself, and to add proof upon proof he first showed them his pierced hands and feet, and then called for fish and ate it before, and doubtless with, them. Jesus is today a man of flesh and bone as much as when he walked Galilee's hills. His blood he poured out upon Calvary. The evidence of the literal, physical resurrection of Christ is so overwhelming that the unbeliever, does violence to his reason not to accept it.

(2) The Ascended Lord, vv. 44-49.

This coming of Jesus and his message of peace and assurance brought also a commission that this great fact be told to others. The event recorded in these verses did not occur in Jerusalem but upon Mount Olivet and constitutes the final appearance of Jesus. As he had done often before, so now he sets his seal upon the Old Testament, expressly speaking of its books under their accepted three-fold division (v. 44). In these there are between three and four hundred direct, not to speak of the indirect, prophecies concerning him. What we need is to have the Holy Spirit that we may "understand" (v. 45), the purpose of his life and death. Jesus taught his disciples what that purpose is (v. 47), viz., the "remission of sins," based on the sure ground of his finished work. This, and this alone, is the gospel and it is to be preached in his name unto all nations—a missionary suggestion—but beginning at home, in Jerusalem. Verse 49 tells us of that other needed preparation to make us effective witnesses, the endowment of the Holy Spirit.

Some Difficulties Doubted.